

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, EAGR, ETRD, ICFTU

SUBJECT: GRAPE AND LETTUCE BOYCOTT: INTERNATIONALS GIVE COOL
RECEPTION TO TEAMSTER REPRESENTATIVE

REFS: EC BRUSSELS 00334; STOCKHOLM 0194

1. SUMMARY. ON JANUARY 28 AMERICAN TEAMSTER UNION REPRESENTATIVE VICKI SAPORTA RETURNED TO STOCKHOLM FOLLOWING UNPRODUCTIVE MEETINGS WITH SECONDARY OFFICIALS OF THE ICFTU AND WCL. THE ICFTU WILL CONTINUE TO URGE ITS AFFILIATED UNIONS TO SUPPORT THE GRAPE AND LETTUCE BOYCOTT (SEE REFTELS) ALTHOUGH ICFTU LEADERS PRIVATELY ADMIT THAT MOST OF THEIR AFFILIATES HAVE LOST INTEREST. WCL SYMPATHIES REMAIN WITH THE AFL-CIO'S UNITED FARM WORKER UNION (UFW) LEADER CESAR CHAVEZ, BUT THEY ARE NOT PARTICIPATING IN OR SUPPORTING THE BOYCOTT. END SUMMARY.

2. MISSION LABOR ATTACHE INTERVIEWS WITH SPECIAL TEAMSTER
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UNION REPRESENTATIVE SAPORTA AND OFFICIALS OF THE ICFTU

AND WCL WITH WHOM SHE MET ON JANUARY 27 INDICATE THAT SAPORTA WAS GIVEN A CORDIAL BUT COOL RECEPTION BY THE TWO INTERNATIONALS. THE FACT THAT SHE WAS RECEIVED BY SECOND ECHELON OFFICIALS IN BOTH ORGANIZATIONS, ENZO FRIZO, ICFTU STAFFER, AND JOSE GONZALEZ, A WCL ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ATTESTS TO THE PREVAILING LACK OF INTEREST IN THE GRAPE AND LETTUCE BOYCOTT HERE IN BRUSSELS AS WELL AS THE RELUCTANCE OF EITHER ORGANIZATION TO BECOME INVOLVED IN A US LABOR DISPUTE, WHICH WOULD ANTAGONIZE THE AFL-CIO.

3. FRIZO WASTED LITTLE TIME IN OUTLINING ICFTU POLICY FOR SAPORTA, STATING THAT THE ICFTU FOR OBVIOUS POLITICAL REASONS MUST ADHERE TO THE POSITION ADOPTED BY THE AFL-CIO AND THE INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE WORKERS SECRETARIAT. ACCORDING TO SAPORTA, FRIZO WAS "BRUTAL" IN CITING REASONS WHY THE ICFTU WILL CONTINUE TO URGE SUPPORT FOR THE BOYCOTT ORGANIZED BY CESAR CHAVEZ AND THE UNITED FARM WORKERS. FRIZO TOLD HER THAT HE WILL FORWARD THE DOCUMENTS SUPPORTING THE TEAMSTER UNION'S OPPOSITION TO CHAVEZ AND THE BOYCOTT, TO THE AFL-CIO AND TO CHAVEZ. HE ALSO ALLUDED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF INVITING CHAVEZ TO RETURN TO EUROPE "TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT."

4. GONZALEZ WAS MUCH FRIENDLIER THAN FRIZO AND ACCORDING TO SAPORTA, EXPLAINED THAT THE WCL PURSUED A NEUTRAL POLICY ON THE BOYCOTT BECAUSE NEITHER THE UFW OR THE TEAMSTERS UNION WAS AFFILIATED TO THE WCL. HOWEVER, DURING A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH GONZALEZ AND OTHER WCL OFFICIALS, THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE WAS INFORMED THAT WCL SYMPATHIES WERE STILL VERY MUCH WITH CHAVEZ, ALTHOUGH IN PRACTICAL TERMS THE WCL DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE THE BOYCOTT IN ANY MEASURABLE WAY.

5. COMMENT: SAPORTA DID NOT EXPECT TO ACCOMPLISH VERY MUCH IN HER MEETINGS WITH THE INTERNATIONALS BUT THE FACT THAT SHE WAS ABLE TO GIVE THE TEAMSTERS' SIDE OF THE CONTROVERSY, EVEN TO SECONDARY OFFICIALS, WAS A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DECIDED PLUS FOR HER ORGANIZATION. FRIZO PRIVATELY CONFIDED TO US THAT SAPORTA HAS INFLUENCED THE THINKING OF KEY LEADERS IN THE ICFTU'S SCANDINAVIAN AFFILIATES WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY ACCOUNTS FOR THEIR WANING INTEREST IN THE BOYCOTT. ANOTHER PLUS FOR THE TEAMSTERS IS THAT THE YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED SAPORTA BENEFITED FROM HER DISCUSSIONS HERE IN TERMS OF LEARNING SOMETHING ABOUT THE POLICIES AND POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

UNIONISM.

6. IT IS INTERESTING TO COMPARE THE STYLES OF THE SOPHISTICATED, VERY ATTRACTIVE, AND MODISHLY-DRESSED SAPORTA WITH THAT OF THE CHARISMATIC CHAVEZ WHO ARRIVED IN BRUSSELS LAST OCTOBER IN A TATTERED WINDBREAKER WITH AN ENTOURAGE OF DOWN-IN-THE-HEEL STUDENTS AND OTHER RAGTAG SUPPORTERS OF "LA CAUSA." CHAVEZ UNDOUBTEDLY APPEALS TO THE UNDERDOG SYMPATHIES OF NEARLY EVERY EUROPEAN SOCIALIST AND CHRISTIAN TRADE UNION LEADER. HOWEVER, HIS HIGHLY DISORGANIZED, POOR MAN'S APPROACH HARDLY INSPIRES CONFIDENCE WHICH MAY ACCOUNT IN PART FOR THE SUCCESS, ALBEIT LIMITED, OF THE BUSINESS-LIKE SAPORTA DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE TEAMSTERS UNION IS STILL VIEWED AS A RACKET-RIDDEN ENTITY BY A LARGE NUMBER OF EUROPEAN TRADE UNION LEADERS.

7. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE ICFTU WILL INVITE CHAVEZ TO RETURN TO EUROPE, BUT ICFTU OFFICIALS ARE CONTEMPLATING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE AFL-CIO ON THE NECESSITY OF REFURBISHING THE UFW IMAGE AND MORE PROFICIENTLY DOCUMENTING THE STRUGGLE OF THE AMERICAN FARM WORKERS TO WHICH THE ICFTU REMAINS FIRMLY COMMITTED AND BELIEVES THE UFW MORE SUITED TO PURSUE THAN THE TEAMSTERS. GREENWALD

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